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Perspectives on Salutogenesis of Scholars Writing in Danish

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Vibeke Koushede and Stig Krøger

Introduction

Searching through the Danish literature on salutogenesis, it quickly becomes apparent that this research area has not received much attention in Denmark. There are to date no Danish research environments that stand out in relation to a focus on salutogenesis. A few Danish researchers have conducted studies using a salutogenic perspective, but the research effort appears sparse and uncoordinated. Over time researchers at different universities—primarily at the University of Copenhagen, and at the Danish National Institute of Public Health at the University of Southern Denmark—have conducted studies examining associations of sense of coherence and physical health, health behaviour, reproductive health, work stress, and sociodemographic factors. The majority of the publications are in English and will therefore not be presented here.

Recently the Danish Healthy Cities Network has established a theme group around mental health. The working foundation for this group is based on a salutogenic perspective (Thybo, 2014). Researchers at the National Institute of Public Health working with mental health promotion are also inspired by this perspective (Koushede, 2014, 2015).

Literature Search

The literature search was conducted in (1) Danish literature databases; Det Kongelige Bibliotek (The Royal Library), and Den Danske Forskningsdatabase (Danish National Research Database); (2) International databases; PubMed Medline, Embase/PsycInfo, Cinahl, and Web of Science. In all these resources, the truncated term salutogen* (the

Danish word for salutogenesis is salutogenese) was used, except in the Danish National Research Database which does not accept truncation. Instead the original term of interest salutogenese was used. Furthermore, sense of coherence was searched as “sense of coherence” in all resources. For all resources, the only limitation set was language = Danish.

Regarding the format of the literature, research articles (print/electronic), books, book chapters, reports, and doctoral theses have been included since the salutogenic model and the concept of salutogenesis are identified within a wide range of literature. Additional quality publications have also been included in order to give the reader a good overview. We have focused on literature where salutogenesis constitutes a central theme or working foundation.

Health Professions and Patient Groups

The salutogenic perspective has been used as a foundation within various health-related professions. Some of the first work written in Danish stems from the medical profession and emerged from work by Hollnagel and Malterud in the mid-late 1990s (Hollnagel & Malterud, 1995, 2002). They suggested salutogenesis as a relevant foundation for talking with patients in general practice about risks and health resources. They developed a theoretical model for a patient-centred, salutogenic approach with the aim of a better balance between health resources and risk factors. In their papers, they briefly present results of dialogues in the general practice consultation based on key questions about self-assessed health resources (Hollnagel & Malterud, 1995, 2002).

For the reader interested in a good introduction and overview of Antonovsky’s theory on salutogenesis, this is presented in a popular scientific manner in two articles (Thybo, 2003, 2004) as well as in a Danish research-based

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book on mental health promotion (Koushede, 2015) all aimed at healthcare professionals.

Nielsen presents a salutogenic framework for professionals working with children and adolescents with problem behaviour (Nielsen, 2004). In her PhD thesis on restrictive eating among children with diabetes or overweight Mark (2009) uses a salutogenic health perspective to examine the children's lifeworld.

In the book *For mental sundhed—et nyt perspektiv* (For mental health—a new perspective), the reader is given an introduction to salutogenesis which is suggested as a relevant underlying theoretical framework for mental health promotion (Koushede, 2015). In *Sundhedsfremme i hverdagen* (Health promotion in everyday life), the reader is similarly given an introduction to salutogenesis followed by examples on how to work with health promotion using a salutogenic perspective with different population groups (Fredens, Johnson, & Thybo, 2011).

Thybo has written a comprehensive textbook on neuropsychology using a salutogenic perspective. The book is aimed at professionals working with individuals with neuropsychological difficulties, and anyone interested in neuropsychology (Thybo, 2013).

Population Groups

Danish population studies have examined the distribution of sense of coherence in relation to age, sex, social class, and self-rated health (Due, 1993; Due & Holstein, 1998). The role of sense of coherence has also been examined in population studies on stress and medicine use (Koushede, 2010).

The research project *Den sociale arv og mønstrebrydere* is based on a salutogenic foundation. In their book the researchers present results from their work related to social inheritance and to those who manage to break negative social patterns. Also they set forward recommendations for policy-makers (Elsborg, Hansen, & Hansen, 1999).

Interventions using a salutogenic approach have been suggested as a positive way to work with and strengthen children and adolescents with problem behaviour, and to increase their possibilities of participating actively in their social spheres (Nielsen, 2004).

Final Remarks

The Danish language literature on salutogenesis is limited with a scarcity of quantitative studies. The majority of the few publications presented above use salutogenesis as a

theoretical framework from which various professions can work.

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